Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:

2019 AP® Music Theory Free-Response Questions

Number of Readers 115

Music Theory

- Number of Students Scored 18,864
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	4,007	21.2
4	3,376	17.9
3	4,628	24.5
2	4,440	23.5
1	2,413	12.8

- Global Mean 3.11

Music Theory Aural Subscore

- Number of Students Scored 18,864
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	4,053	21.5
4	3,415	18.1
3	4,488	23.8
2	4,425	23.5
1	2,483	13.2

- Global Mean 3.11

Music Theory Nonaural Subscore

- Number of Students Scored 18,864
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	3,838	20.3
4	3,396	18.0
3	4,863	25.8
2	4,336	23.0
1	2,431	12.9

- Global Mean 3.10

The following comments on the 2019 free-response questions for AP® Music Theory were written by the Chief Reader, Ron Rodman, Carleton College. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

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Question #1

Task: Melodic Dictation **Topic:** Major/Bass/Simple meter
Max. Points: 9 **Mean Score:** 4.06

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-measure, major-key melody in simple meter and notate the melody;
- hear and notate ascending and descending scalar patterns;
- hear and notate the dotted rhythm in the first measure of the melody;
- hear and notate melodic patterns containing stepwise motion and melodic skips in the tonic and dominant triads;
- hear and notate an idiomatic, melodic cadence; and
- hear and notate pitches correctly in bass clef.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate ability of converting a heard melody into music notation;
- understanding of the topics (major scale, bass clef, simple meter) through moderately correct notation; and
- limited difficulty with pitch and rhythm as demonstrated by common errors of notation.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Inability to hear skips vs. steps	• Ability to differentiate and notate skips and steps
• Inability to notate the entire melody, especially the interior measures	• Ability to hear and notate the entire melody.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Practice aural skills daily.
- Teach students to listen to and remember the melody before notating on the page.
- Expose students to a wide variety of melodies in major and minor, various meters, and differing tempi.
- Do more sight singing and focus on developing scale degree awareness, so that students are not measuring leaps as intervals devoid of a tonal context.
- Do not ignore rhythm; teach students a vocabulary of typical rhythmic patterns in both simple and compound meters.
- Stress proper notation, including correct use of stems, beams, accidentals, dots, etc. Constantly reinforce this until clear notation is a habit. Students may lose points because of illegible notation.
- Discuss question strategy with students; tell them that they can expect straightforward rhythms, a range of approximately one octave, and a likely ending on tonic on a strong beat. Caution students that even if they are unsure about some of the durations, they should not leave noteheads without rhythmic values indicated.

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What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' melodic dictation skills.
    - In the CED, melodic dictation corresponds to Course Skill 3.A: "Notate the pitches and rhythm of a performed melody (in treble or bass clef; in a major or minor key; may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - In Unit 1, skill 3.A is paired with Topic 1.5 (Major Keys and Key Signatures) and Topic 1.8 (Rhythmic Patterns), as these are two logical points in the progression of topics to assess students' developing dictation skills.
        - In Unit 2 and beyond, a regular "Teacher's Note" serves as a reminder to keep practicing this skill throughout the course.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing melodic dictation can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 191
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
    - A sample Melodic Dictation FRQ is also provided in the Exam Information section, on p. 223.
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice melodic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Melodic dictation free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam melodic dictation FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.A).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two melodic dictation free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Sight-Singing: Your Key to Success in Melodic Dictation*

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Question #2

Task: Melodic Dictation **Topic:** Minor/Treble/Compound meter
Max. Points: 9 **Mean Score:** 3.21

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-measure minor-key melody in compound meter and notate the melody;
- hear and notate ascending and descending scalar patterns in the melodic minor mode;
- hear and notate an ascending arpeggiated, tonic triad;
- hear and notate a descending arpeggiated, subdominant triad;
- hear and notate the dotted rhythm in measure 2 and the sixteenth notes in measure 3 of the melody;
- hear and notate melodic patterns containing stepwise motion and melodic skips;
- hear and notate a chromatic lower neighbor tone in measure 2 of the melody;
- hear and notate an idiomatic melodic cadence; and
- hear and notate pitches correctly in treble clef.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited ability of converting a heard melody into music notation;
- incomplete understanding of minor scale, treble clef, and compound meter, as indicated by problematic notation;
- marked difficulty with rhythm, as demonstrated by errors of notating common beat patterns used in compound meters; and
- limited proficiency with minor keys, shown by errors in notating melodic minor patterns.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Lack of understanding of melodic minor	• Ability to hear and correctly notate melodies in melodic minor
• Misunderstanding of compound meter, and its rhythmic groupings	• Hearing and correctly notating rhythmic patterns in compound meter, with correct beaming.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teach students to listen to and remember the melody before notating on the page.
- Expose students to a wide variety of melodies in major and minor, various meters, and differing tempi. Focus on all forms of the minor, but stress that melodic minor will be used in melodic contexts.
- Do more sight singing and focus on developing scale degree awareness, so that students are not measuring leaps as intervals devoid of a tonal context.
- Do not ignore rhythm; teach students a vocabulary of typical rhythmic patterns in the basic meters.
- Stress proper notation, including correct use of stems, beams, dots, accidentals, etc., especially in compound meters. Constantly reinforce this until clear notation is a habit. Students may lose points because of illegible notation.

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- Discuss question strategy with students; tell them that they can expect straightforward rhythms, a range of approximately one octave, and a likely ending on tonic on a strong beat. Caution students that even if they are unsure about some of the durations, they should not leave noteheads without rhythmic values indicated.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' melodic dictation skills.
    - In the CED, melodic dictation corresponds to Course Skill 3.A: "Notate the pitches and rhythm of a performed melody (in treble or bass clef; in a major or minor key; may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - Skill 3.A appears as a suggested skill in early Units of the Course Framework, paired with topics and learning objectives directly related to melodic dictation.
        - In Unit 2 and beyond, a regular "Teacher's Note" serves as a reminder to keep practicing this skill throughout the course.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing melodic dictation can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 191
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
    - A sample Melodic Dictation FRQ is also provided in the Exam Information section, on p. 223.
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice melodic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Melodic dictation free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 1, 2, 3, 6, and 8.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam melodic dictation FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.A).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two melodic dictation free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Sight-Singing: Your Key to Success in Melodic Dictation*

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Question #3

Task: Harmonic Dictation **Topic:** Major mode/inverted triads
Max. Points: 24 **Mean Score:** 12.74

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-part progression in a major key and notate the outer voices;
- provide the correct Roman numeral analysis of the chords;
- demonstrate a knowledge of common chord progressions, including a cadential six-four;
- hear and notate triads in root position and in inversion and a seventh chord in root position; and
- hear, notate, and analyze a deceptive cadence.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of diatonic major mode, triads in root position and inversion, seventh chords, and notating the soprano and bass voices, as demonstrated by use of music notation; and
- some difficulties in precisely identifying diatonic chords, as shown in the Roman and Arabic numerals below the staff in the student responses.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Hearing leaps in the bass line, resulting in incorrect harmonic analysis	• Hearing leaps in the bass, so that harmonic analysis is correct.
• Confusing viio6 with V6/4, or another chord	• Hearing viio6 as a harmonic entity.
• Correctly hearing and notating the Cadential 6/4 chord	• Ability to hear and correctly analyze the cadential 6/4 chord.
• Inability to hear the deceptive cadence	• Ability to hear and notate the deceptive cadence.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teach students to identify cadence types (including deceptive,) and to work backwards from the ends of phrases.
- Encourage students to check that their bass and soprano lines match their Roman numeral analysis.
- Emphasize the distinctive sounds of triads versus seventh chords.
- Practice hearing and notating inverted chords.
- Practice two-part dictation when given a four-part aural prompt.
- Teach common chord progressions and inversions, including the cadential 6/4 chord.

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What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' harmonic dictation skills.
    - In the CED, harmonic dictation corresponds to:
        - Course Skill 3.B: "Notate the soprano and bass pitches of a performed harmonic progression in a major or minor key (may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - Course Skill 3.C: "Identify the harmonic function of chords in a performed harmonic progression by providing an analysis using Roman and Arabic numerals."
    - Skill 3.C first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 3 (Music Fundamentals: Triads and Seventh Chords) where it is paired with learning objectives dealing with chord identification using Roman and Arabic numerals.
    - Skill 3.B then appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase) as students are introduced to soprano-bass counterpoint and SATB voice-leading.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing harmonic dictation can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 192
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice harmonic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Harmonic dictation free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 3, 5, and 7.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam harmonic dictation FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.B & 3.C).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two harmonic dictation free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Techniques for Teaching Harmonic Dictation* (p. 20)

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Question #4

Task: Harmonic Dictation
Topic: Minor mode/secondary chord
Max. Points: 24
Mean Score: 10.07

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- hear a four-part progression in a minor key and notate the outer voices;
- hear and notate triads and seventh chords in root position and in inversion;
- hear and notate the secondary dominant chord and provide an appropriate Roman numeral analysis;
- demonstrate a knowledge of common chord progressions;
- provide the correct Roman numeral analysis of the chords; and
- hear, notate, and analyze a perfect authentic cadence.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited understanding of minor mode progressions including one secondary chord, as revealed by pitch notation and chord identification;
- fair understanding of outer voice motion, as demonstrated by use of music notation; and
- limited understanding of chord progressions presented in performed music, as reflected in notation of Roman and Arabic numerals below the staff.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Hearing and notating the iio6 chord vs. a iv chord.	• Hearing and notating the iio6 chord
• Inability to hear and notate the V6/5/V chord, complete with accidental	• Hearing and notating the V6/5/V chord, complete with accidental
• General misunderstanding of harmonic minor and accidentals to be used therein	• Hearing and notating harmonic minor in the specified key.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Teach students to identify cadence types and to work backwards from the ends of phrases.
- Encourage students to check that their bass and soprano lines match their Roman numeral analysis.
- Emphasize the distinctive sounds of all triads (including the diminished triad) versus seventh chords.
- Emphasize the distinctive sounds of secondary dominant chords. Practice notating and listening for secondary dominants.
- Practice hearing and notating inverted chords.
- Practice two-part dictation when given a four-part aural prompt.
- Teach common chord progressions and inversions.

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What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing students' harmonic dictation skills.
    - In the CED, harmonic dictation corresponds to
        - Course Skill 3.B: "Notate the soprano and bass pitches of a performed harmonic progression in a major or minor key (may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - Course Skill 3.C: "Identify the harmonic function of chords in a performed harmonic progression by providing an analysis using Roman and Arabic numerals."
    - Skill 3.C first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 3 (Music Fundamentals: Triads and Seventh Chords) where it is paired with learning objectives dealing with chord identification using Roman and Arabic numerals.
    - Skill 3.B then appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase) as students are introduced to soprano-bass counterpoint and SATB voice-leading.
    - Practicing harmonic dictation in conjunction with topics on predominant function and cadence (Unit 5: Harmony and Voice Leading II: Chord Progressions and Predominant Function) and topics on secondary function (Unit 7: Harmony and Voice Leading IV: Secondary Function) will also help prepare students for this free-response question.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing harmonic dictation can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 192
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice harmonic dictation with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Harmonic dictation free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 3, 5, and 7.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam harmonic dictation FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.B & 3.C).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two harmonic dictation free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Techniques for Teaching Harmonic Dictation* (p. 20)

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Question #5

Task: Part writing
Topic: Figured Bass
Max. Points: 25
Mean Score: 15.17

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- realize a figured bass progression in Common Practice style in four voices;
- employ smooth voice-leading procedures;
- demonstrate understanding of diatonic harmony, including chord spelling, spacing, doubling, and voice leading in a four-part texture;
- analyze chords using Roman numerals;
- spell chords in a minor key, including raising the leading tone in the dominant chord;
- notate a Phrygian (iv^6–V) half cadence;
- notate a suspension, including its proper preparation and resolution; and
- correctly realize inverted triads and seventh chords utilizing all chord members.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of figured bass realization, as shown by the number of correctly spelled chords and correct Roman numeral analyses;
- moderate abilities in employing smooth voice leading procedures, as shown throughout the progression; and
- fair abilities to write a Phrygian half cadence, as demonstrated in the last measure.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• General misunderstanding of chord spelling and progressions in minor keys.	• Ability to realize progressions in a minor key with correct chord spellings
• General misunderstanding of figured bass	• Ability to realize chords in figured bass
• Inability to write a Phrygian cadence without part-writing errors	• Ability to write a Phrygian cadence without part-writing errors.
• Misunderstanding figures to successfully compose a 4—3 suspension	• Ability to compose a suspension with correct preparation, suspension, and resolution.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Coach students on how to avoid over-complicating the required tasks.
- Practice writing clear, unambiguous music notation by hand.
- Encourage students to think about voice leading before working on vertical realization.
- Teach students to use stepwise motion and to keep the common tone whenever possible. (Think like a singer.)
- Review the meanings of the figures, giving special attention to identification of chordal roots.

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- Emphasize that figured bass is not the same thing as inversion symbols.
- Drill chord spelling and remind students that chord spelling errors result in a 5-point deduction.
- Practice writing iv–V progressions in minor keys, especially the Phrygian cadence (iv^6–V).
- Coach students on the correct way to part-write suspensions.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing part-writing and figured bass realization skills.
    - In the CED, part-writing and figured bass realization correspond to:
        - Course Skill 4.A: "Apply knowledge of common-practice tonality to spell chords and to follow procedures of 18th-century voice leading to connect chords in harmonic progressions."
        - Course Skill 4.B: "Complete a four-part harmonic progression by realizing a figured bass line and providing a Roman numeral analysis of the completed progression."
    - Skill 4.B first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 3 (Music Fundamentals: Triads and Seventh Chords) where it is paired with Topic 3.3 (Chord Inversions and Figures: Introduction to Figured Bass).
        - Skill 4.B appears again a suggested skill for Topic 6.4 (Embellishing Tones: Identifying and Writing Suspensions; Identifying Retardations), as writing a suspension is a common element of free-response question 5.
    - Skill 4.A first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase) as students are introduced to soprano-bass counterpoint and SATB voice-leading.
        - Skill 4.A appears throughout Units 5 and 7, in conjunction with topics on predominant triads and seventh chords, cadential and other six-four chords, and writing secondary dominant and leading tone chords.
        - Any learning objective that involves part-writing (skill 4.A) can also be adapted to incorporate figured-bass realization practice.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing figured-bass realization and part-writing can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194-195
    - A sample Part Writing from Figured Bass FRQ is also provided in the Exam Information section, on p. 223.
- Teachers can use released exam questions with scoring guidelines to practice part-writing from figured bass with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Part-writing from figured bass free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 4 and 7.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam part-writing from figured bass FRQs, you may search by question type or skill. Search by skill 4.B to find figured bass part-writing questions. Search by skill 4.A to find a variety of part-writing questions.
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain one part-writing from figured bass free-response question. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Thinking Horizontally: Learning Part Writing and Figured Bass Through Analysis* (p. 140)

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Question #6

Task: Part writing **Topic:** Roman numerals
Max. Points: 18 **Mean Score:** 9.59

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- write a four-part chord progression from Roman numerals;
- demonstrate an understanding of chord spelling, spacing, and doubling;
- demonstrate an understanding of chord inversions;
- demonstrate command of voice-leading procedures;
- demonstrate knowledge of secondary dominant chords;
- notate an authentic cadence;
- demonstrate an understanding of tendency tones and their resolutions; and demonstrate knowledge of how to approach and resolve chordal dissonances.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- proficient understanding of diatonic Roman numerals, as demonstrated by the spelling of chords;
- limited abilities at spelling secondary dominant seventh chords, as shown by the frequent errors in the spelling of this chord; and
- insufficient understanding of voice leading procedures, as demonstrated by the limited number of proficient responses.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• General lack of proficiency in part-writing skills	• Effective proficiency in part-writing
• Lack of understanding of spelling and/or resolution of the secondary dominant	• Proficiency in spelling and resolution of secondary dominants
• Lack of proficiency in preparing chromatic alterations	• Proficiency in preparing chromatic alterations
• Lack of proficiency in resolving chordal sevenths	• Proficiency in resolving the chordal sevenths.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Encourage students to use smooth voice leading, and especially to avoid large leaps.
- Encourage students to use contrary motion in the outer voices.
- Encourage students to write the outer voices first and to fill in the inner voices as a pair, after the outer voices have been carefully checked.

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- Avoid overemphasis of doubling the root, because this is not always appropriate (especially when chords are inverted).
- Think carefully about the key signature, about whether a chord should need any accidentals, and, if so, which specific accidentals are needed.
- Be careful not to confuse the leading tone (scale degree seven) with the chordal seventh.
- Drill inversions and their figures, carefully distinguishing triads from seventh chords. Students should be aware that they will not receive any points for a chord if the inversion is incorrect or if a seventh is added or omitted (i.e., does not match the analysis provided).
- Focus on proper treatment of dissonance, especially the approach to and resolution of the chordal seventh. Students should be aware that the seventh must resolve in the same voice (not just the same register).
- Emphasize the importance of resolving leading tones, particularly in outer voices.
- Consider identifying tendency tones with a special symbol (e.g., circling them or writing arrows from them) to highlight their importance and their resolutions.
- Advise students not to add embellishing tones unless specifically required by the figures.
- Address the strategic use of incomplete chords. Often voice leading is substantially improved when the fifth is omitted from a root-position chord.
- Discuss the appropriate use of charts, diagrams, and other memory aids. Writing charts and diagrams often seems unhelpful for this particular question; it takes time, the information is not always relevant to the question, and the layout sometimes seems to cause mistakes because the student confuses the layout of the diagram with the actual music notation.
- Address issues of notation, particularly the proper way to write noteheads and accidentals (including the placement of accidentals on the left side of the notehead rather than the right), and how to portray doubling.
- When discussing the use of accidentals, use the terms "raise" and "lower" rather than "sharp" and "flat" because sometimes a natural (rather than a sharp or flat) is needed.
- Practice writing common cadences, so that typical voice-leading combinations become familiar.
- Students who can't answer the entire question should be encouraged to skip unfamiliar portions and fill in the chords that they know.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing part-writing skills and completing a four-part progression based on Roman numerals.
    - In the CED, part-writing and realizing a four-part progression based on Roman numerals correspond to:
        - Course Skill 4.A: "Apply knowledge of common-practice tonality to spell chords and to follow procedures of 18th-century voice leading to connect chords in harmonic progressions."
        - Course Skill 4.C: "Complete a four-part harmonic progression based on the Roman numeral analysis provided."
    - Skill 4.C first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 3 (Music Fundamentals: Triads and Seventh Chords) where it is paired with the introduction to Roman numerals and figured bass symbols and realization.
        - Skill 4.C appears again a suggested skill for Topic 6.4 (Embellishing Tones: Identifying and Writing Suspensions; Identifying Retardations).
    - Skill 4.A first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase) as students are introduced to soprano-bass counterpoint and SATB voice-leading.
        - Skill 4.A appears throughout Units 5 and 7, in conjunction with topics on predominant triads and seventh chords, cadential and other six-four chords, and writing secondary dominant and leading tone chords.
        - Any learning objective that involves part-writing (skill 4.A) can be adapted to incorporate part-writing from Roman numerals.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing part-writing from Roman numerals can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194-195

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- Teachers can use released exam questions with scoring guidelines to practice part-writing from Roman numerals with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice free-response questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Part-writing from Roman numerals free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 4 and 6.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam part-writing from Roman numeral FRQs, you may search by question type or skill. Search by skill 4.C to find Roman numerals part-writing questions. Search by skill 4.A to find a variety of part-writing questions.
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain one part-writing from Roman numerals free-response question. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Thinking Horizontally: Learning Part Writing and Figured Bass Through Analysis* (p. 140)

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Question #7

Task: Harmonization of a Melody
Topic: Bass line/Roman numerals
Max. Points: 9
Mean Score: 4.97

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- compose a bass line following the rules of eighteenth-century counterpoint;
- write standard authentic and half cadences;
- harmonize a melody with an appropriate chord progression;
- use conventional harmonic patterns;
- recognize and correctly use a secondary dominant chord;
- correctly harmonize a chromatically-altered scale degree 4 in the melody;
- use six-four chords according to conventional common practice;
- treat the leading tone correctly, concerning both chord voicing and voice leading; and
- use embellishments correctly in a two-part framework.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate understanding of adding a bass line and Roman numeral analysis to a melody, as shown by the number of responses that earned a middle score; and
- fair understanding of cadences, as demonstrated by proper use of harmonic patterns and bass lines at the ends of phrase.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Writing Roman numerals that don't agree with the composed bass line	• Writing Roman numerals that agree with the bass line.
• General misunderstanding of proper chord progressions in the Common Practice Style	• Proficiency in writing good, stylistic chord progressions.
• Composing bass lines that clash with the melody	• Understanding of consonance and dissonance between bass and soprano.
• Poor chord choice, including weak inversions at cadences	• Proficiency in selecting good, stylistic chords, and strong cadences

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Discourage overuse of six-four chords, except for the cadential six-four if appropriate at a cadence. Remind students that passing and pedal six-four chords must occur on weak beats.
- Encourage the use of root position chords at cadences.
- Discourage the use of the root position vii^{o6} chord.
- Teach students to prepare and resolve chordal sevenths properly.

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- Teach students that ii♯ is not proper notation for a secondary dominant chord.
- Remind students that unaccented passing tones are the only appropriate embellishments for this exercise, and that the given melody will not include accented non-harmonic tones.
- Encourage students to use the first phrase as a guide for consistency throughout the question.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing bass line composition/melody harmonization and writing common-practice harmonic progressions and cadences.
    - In the CED, writing common-practice harmonic progressions and composing a bass line correspond to:
        - Course Skill 4.A: "Apply knowledge of common-practice tonality to spell chords and to follow procedures of 18th-century voice leading to connect chords in harmonic progressions."
        - Course Skill 4.D: "Compose a bass line to harmonize a given melody, implying appropriate harmony, and identify the implied harmony using Roman and Arabic numerals."
    - Skill 4.D first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase). Topic 4.1 on Soprano-Bass Counterpoint contains several learning objectives dedicated to composing a bass line.
        - Skill 4.D appears again a suggested skill for Topic 6.2 (Embellishing Tones: Writing Passing Tones and Neighbor Tones) and Topic 7.2 (Part Writing of Secondary Dominant Chords).
    - Skill 4.A first appears as a suggested skill in Unit 4 (Harmony and Voice Leading I: Chord Function, Cadence, and Phrase) as students are introduced to soprano-bass counterpoint and SATB voice-leading.
        - Skill 4.A appears throughout Units 5 and 7, in conjunction with topics on predominant triads and seventh chords, cadential and other six-four chords, and writing secondary dominant and leading tone chords.
        - Any learning objective that involves part-writing (skill 4.A) can be adapted to include writing common-practice harmonic progressions and composing a bass line to harmonize a melody.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing harmonization of a melody can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 4, pp. 194, 196
- Teachers can use released exam questions with scoring guidelines to practice harmonizing a melody/composing a bass line with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Harmonization of a melody/composing a bass line free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for Units 5, 6, 7, and 8.
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam harmonization of a melody/composing a bass line FRQs, you may search by question type or skill. Search by skill 4.D to find this type of question. Search by skill 4.A to find a variety of free-response questions on part writing and composition.
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain one harmonization of a melody/composing a bass line free-response question. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Interpreting and Harmonizing Melodies: Some Formulas for Success* *Interpreting and Harmonizing Melodies: Some Formulas for Success* (p. 32)

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Question #S1

Task: Sight Singing
Topic: Minor/Treble/Simple Meter
Max. Points: 9
Mean Score: 4.75

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- sight read and sing a melody in minor mode;
- sing in simple quadruple meter;
- perform common rhythmic patterns;
- perform a dotted rhythm;
- sing skips and stepwise motion in both ascending and descending directions;
- sing a melody with a vocal range of a seventh;
- perform chordal skips within the tonic triad;
- establish and maintain a steady tempo;
- establish and retain a sense of tonic; and
- read in treble clef.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- moderate effectiveness at converting notated music to performed music by singing a minor mode melody in the treble clef using simple meter; and
- moderate proficiency of performing common rhythmic patterns, demonstrated by moderate success singing simple patterns in simple meter.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Confusing major and minor keys	• Recognizing and singing in the required minor key
• Losing the sense of tonic and other scale degrees while singing	• Ability to retain tonic and other scale degrees during singing.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Sight sing regularly in class.
- Practice reading and performing in different clefs.
- Encourage students not to hum, but to sing with an initial consonant sound; humming obscures accurate pitch.
- Encourage students to sing strongly so they can be heard.
- Encourage students to sing the tonic triad to establish the key/tonic.
- Encourage students to select a starting pitch that is comfortable for their individual range.
- Encourage students to ghost-finger along, as if playing their instruments, while singing.
- Encourage students to sing using contour—not just rhythm on the tonic pitch—if they struggle greatly with pitch.
- Encourage students to keep going even if they make a mistake.
- Practice common rhythmic patterns in various meters.

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- Emphasize holding notes for their full value.
- Allow students to use a neutral syllable if, by March, they are struggling with solfège or numbers.
- Encourage students to analyze the mode of the melody they are performing.
- Encourage students to sing aloud during the 1-minute-15-second practice time.
- Encourage students to practice rhythm first during the 1-minute-15-second practice time.
- Let students know that it is acceptable to write on the test during the practice period.
- Let students know that it is acceptable to conduct while they practice so that they establish a steady tempo.
- Give practice AP® Music Theory Exams, including the free examples posted on AP Central.
- Simulate the recording scenario for students.
- AP® Music Theory teachers need to work with their administrations to establish an appropriate testing environment for the sight singing questions. Students need to be sonically isolated from each other, so that they do not hear each other's practice and performance.
- Train proctors prior to the day of the exam.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing sight singing.
    - In the CED, sight singing corresponds to Course Skill 3.D: "Apply knowledge of musical symbols and terms to sing the pitches and rhythms of a notated melody (melody may be in treble or bass clef, in a major or minor key, or in simple or compound meter, and it may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - In Unit 1, skill 3.D is paired with Topic 1.1 (Pitch and Pitch Notation), Topic 1.8 (Rhythmic Patterns), and Topic 1.10 (Dynamics and Articulation) so students can practice this skill early and often.
        - In Unit 2 and beyond, a regular "Teacher's Note" serves as a reminder to keep practicing this skill throughout the course.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing sight singing can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 193
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice sight singing with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Sight singing free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for all Units (1–8).
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam sight singing FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.D).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two sight singing free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Teaching Sight Singing* and *Sight Singing: A Strategy for the Non-Singer and the Underprepared Student* (p. 16)

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Question #S2

Task: Sight Singing
Topic: Major/Bass/Compound Meter
Max. Points: 9
Mean Score: 3.63

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- sight read and sing a melody in major mode;
- sing in compound duple meter;
- perform common rhythmic patterns in compound meter;
- perform dotted rhythms;
- sing skips and stepwise motion in both ascending and descending directions;
- sing a melody with a vocal range of a ninth;
- perform chordal skips within the tonic and submediant triads;
- sing a chromatic passing tone;
- establish and maintain a steady tempo;
- establish and retain a sense of tonic; and
- read in bass clef.

How well did the response address the course content related to this question? How well did the responses integrate the skills required on this question?

Student responses demonstrated:

- limited understanding of major mode, bass clef, and compound meter, as demonstrated by the number of mediocre responses;
- moderate success at singing with stepwise motion and recognizing common rhythm patterns in compound meter; and
- deficient understanding of advanced tonality, shown by incorrect performance of the chromatic embellishing tones.
- difficulty singing leaps, especially those that did not outline the tonic triad.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Common Misconceptions/Knowledge Gaps	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding*
• Difficulty singing leaps, especially those that did not outline the tonic triad.	• Ability to sing all leaps
• Difficulty in singing the chromatically-altered half-step	• Ability to sing the half-step.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer to teachers to help them improve the student performance on the exam?

- Train aural skills daily.
- Start singing early in the year; sing often in major and minor modes, in simple and compound meters, using various clefs and ranges.
- Coach students on where to place a melody in a range of the voice that is both comfortable and executable.
- Teach and use a system of singing, such as solfège, numbers, etc. Emphasize the relationship of scale degrees in the system.
- Emphasize the difference between major and minor scales and triads.

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- Look at a melody as being centered on a tonic triad.
- If you teach a student a vocalization pattern to establish tonic, make sure the student understands its relation to tonality.
- Practice melodies that contain chromatically-altered tones.
- Encourage students to articulate each note (e.g., "ta ta" instead of a slurred response).
- Singing letter names, scale degree numbers, or solfège, without correct pitch and rhythm doesn't earn credit.
- Practice executing rhythm patterns, including dotted rhythms.
- Emphasize rhythmic integrity; the duration of the final note is important.
- Teach students to choose an appropriate tempo for singing. The tempo of this exercise was marked *Moderato*. Although points were not deducted for an incorrect tempo set at the start of the exercise, students tended to fare worse if they chose to perform at a painstakingly slow tempo OR at a very fast tempo.
- Offer strategies for the sight singing process: use of the practice time; identification of clef, key signature, range, and time signature; identification of tricky spots; recognition of basic rhythm and melodic patterns.
- Simulate the testing experience. Let students practice with the recording technology in a situation that replicates where the proctor and equipment will be during testing.
- Encourage students to sing freely with full voice during the practice and performance portions of the exam.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the content and skill(s) required on this question?

- Please refer to the 2019-2020 Course and Exam Description (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/pdf/ap-music-theory-course-and-exam-description.pdf) to find suggestions for introducing, practicing, and assessing sight singing.
    - In the CED, sight singing corresponds to Course Skill 3.D: "Apply knowledge of musical symbols and terms to sing the pitches and rhythms of a notated melody (melody may be in treble or bass clef, in a major or minor key, or in simple or compound meter, and it may include chromatically altered pitches.)"
        - In Unit 1, skill 3.D is paired with Topic 1.1 (Pitch and Pitch Notation), Topic 1.8 (Rhythmic Patterns), and Topic 1.10 (Dynamics and Articulation), so students can practice this skill early and often.
        - In Unit 2 and beyond, a regular "Teacher's Note" serves as a reminder to keep practicing this skill throughout the course.
    - Additional suggestions for teaching and practicing sight singing can be found in the "Instructional Approaches" in the back of the CED, specifically:
        - Developing Course Skills, Skill Category 3, p. 193
        - Aural Skills Progression, pp. 197–203
- Teachers can use released exam questions with audio prompts and scoring guidelines to practice sight singing with their students. Please visit the AP Music Theory exam page (https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-music-theory/exam) on AP Central to access released free-response questions from 1999–2019.
- As of August 1, 2019, scaffolded practice questions will be available on AP Classroom (https://myap.collegeboard.org). Practice questions are paired with each topic and make up the Personal Progress Check at the end of each unit.
    - Sight singing free-response questions appear on the Personal Progress Checks for all Units (1–8).
- The AP Question Bank, also accessible via AP Classroom in August 2019, contains searchable topic questions, Personal Progress Check questions, and released questions from past AP exams.
    - To quickly find all practice and exam sight singing FRQs, you may search by question type or skill (3.D).
- A new complete Practice Exam will become available early in 2020 and will contain two sight singing free-response questions. For the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year, the exam will be available as a PDF behind Course Audit and in the AP Question Bank. In the 2020-2021 year and beyond, all released exams and practice exams will be available in the AP Question Bank only.

Also see: *Teaching Sight Singing* and *Sight Singing: A Strategy for the Non-Singer and the Underprepared Student* (p. 16)

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